

POOR COCKNEY BOY LEAVES SCHOOL AT 15 LATER TO BECOME PRESIDENT OF U.P.E.I.

by Marsha L. Gaudet



Ronald James Baker was born into a poor Cockney family some 15-20 years before W.W. II. He left school at age 15 to run what he describes as a "very, very bad" dance band. He came to Canada with the RAF during the war to train as a navigator. He served with the Canadians in England and Germany but decided to come back to Canada within a week of leaving the RAF.

Ron Baker attended the University of British Columbia where he obtained his B.A. and M.A. He was with UBC and Simon Fraser University for 22 years before he came to U.P.E.I. He was a student and faculty member at UBC for 16 years. He was the first appointment at Simon Fraser and was a planner there for 6 years.

"A new university is a habit for me" states Baker, as one of the reasons for being attracted to UPEI. He had previous experience with 2 new universities and about 6 new colleges. "It looked to me a very, very interesting job, to put together two institutions that really did not want to be put together, in many ways". The fact that it was PEI's only university also seemed enticing.

Ronald Baker resides in Charlottetown with his family. Life on the Island was very different for him at first.

Never living permanently in anything but a metropolitan area (e.g. London or Vancouver), Baker said there were a lot of differences at first. But he has learned to really like Island life.

President Baker is a lover of ballroom dancing. He grew up with people connected

with vaudeville shows in Eng. He taught ballroom dancing at the age of fifteen. He and his wife claim to be very fond of ballroom dancing. He comments that "we're very out of date, anything after the 1940's we don't know."

He is a fanatic reader, reading about a book a day. He once participated in squash, soccer and field hockey but just doesn't seem to be able to find the time to participate in these sports or any others with his present position. President Baker likes to try his hand at photography. Watch for some of his work in upcoming issues of the SUN.

PRESIDENCY DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE

President Baker was asked to explain what the job of president entails. He said it was "terribly difficult to describe". It is essentially "keeping the different parts of the University community and public in touch with one another." President Baker is expected to deal with national (e.g. Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada) and regional (e.g. Association of Atlantic Universities) bodies; to deal with the government; to work internally within the university to see that curriculum proposals to the Senate are discussed in the different faculties; and to maintain communications with the Student Union, Faculty Association, Faculty and the Non-Academic staff.

President Baker is responsible for administration. He is ultimately responsible for appointments, promotions and dismissals. He sees, essentially, that procedures are followed properly. Some of his responsibilities occur only occasionally (e.g. fund-raising campaign) He works on negotiations for pay and promotion scales. He attempts to see that the resources for the university are used as they should. He tries to see that different areas within the university are working properly.

President Baker is responsible for keeping things developing and for looking to the future to see what U.P.E.I. will be like in five years. The President moves around a great deal. The President is

responsible, in the legal sense, to the Board of Governors. The Board appoints and dismisses the President. The Board is the financial governing body. President Baker is responsible, in another sense, to the Senate. The Senate is the academic governing board. The President must try to see that decisions of the Senate are carried out. Ultimately, though, the President is responsible to the Board of Governors.

Although President Baker communicates with the public through TV and radio (media), he feels his position is NOT one of public relations. Throughout Canada, presidents of universities are less involved with public relations than in the U.S.A., where institutions depend more on private donations and fees than do those in Canada. Canadian universities are really public, "no matter what we're called," stipulates


President Baker.

TENURE NOT NEARLY AS SIGNIFICANT

Tenure, as the traditional concept, in President Baker's mind, is virtually gone. The concept of tenure, i.e. that one can remain on the job unless it can be shown that one is no good at it, is applied more and more elsewhere. Fair employment practices extend protection to the employees. Nowadays, the difference between someone who has tenure and someone who doesn't, when it comes to getting rid of someone, is very, very small. Years ago it was extremely easy to get rid of someone NOT on tenure.

Tenure is not a major issue now, according to President Baker. It was once necessary because, throughout history, attempts were made to stop academics from telling the truth as their studies led them to believe it should be taught.

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